

DOCUMENTS ACCOMPANYING THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL MESSAGE.

REPORT OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, Dec. 2, 1841.
To the President of the United States:

In the discharge of the duty of reporting to you the condition of the General Post Office, I have to regret that my recent induction into office will prevent me from giving you that full development at this time so necessary to a clear understanding of the various and extended operations of a Department so important and interesting to every class of our fellow-citizens. Unlike the other Departments of Government, which derive their support from the National Treasury, the General Post Office looks for the means to continue and extend its operations to the income derived alone from a successful administration of the laws prescribing its duties and privileges.

The General Post Office, at first almost the creature of administrative discretion, necessarily so remains to a great degree, at the present time. In its infancy, it required the constant and vigilant superintendence of its head to direct its affairs in such manner as to extend the sphere of its usefulness, commensurate with the increase and extent of population and business. Equal, if not greater, vigilance is demanded at the present day.

It is to be desired that, in the general administration of the Government, as little discretion as possible should be left to those charged with public trusts; and I regret my acquaintance with the details of the Department, at this time, is so limited, as not to qualify me to suggest specific improvements in the laws pertaining to it, whereby much of that discretion, heretofore exercised, might be retained and profitably regulated by legislative enactments.

The propriety of these remarks will be fully demonstrated by a review of the history of the Post Office operations, from their commencement to the present time.

In 1790, the whole number of post offices in the United States did not exceed seven; the number of miles of post road, 1,775; the revenue, \$37,936; the expenditures, \$38,140. In 1840, it will be seen that the whole number of post offices, in the United States, was 13,488; the number of miles of post road, 155,739; the gross revenue for the year was \$4,539,252, and the expenditure was \$4,759,110. The necessity of guarding, as far as practicable, by specific legislation, such an amount of income and expenditure, and the duties and liabilities of so many agents must be apparent.

As has already been remarked, the original design in the establishment of the Post Office Department was that its income should sustain its operations. That principle ought never to be abandoned. Whilst the Department should not be regarded as a source of revenue to the nation, it should never become an annual charge on the Treasury.

Upon assuming the duties of the office, my first object was to investigate its financial condition; and it became my duty to inform you that I did not find it in that prosperous state which the demands upon it require.

The income of this Department is always liable to be affected by the fluctuations of the business of the country. It is increased or depressed in proportion to the increase or depression of that business. Besides this cause of fluctuation in its income, other causes of a reduction more or less in every year, may be found in the increased facilities which the travel upon railroads and steamboats furnishes for the transmission of letters and newspapers by private conveyance; secondly, in the great extension, to say nothing of the abuse, of the franking privilege; thirdly, in the recent establishment of what are called private presses, upon the great mail routes of the United States; fourthly, in the frauds practised upon the Department, in evading, by various devices, the payment of the postage imposed by law. While all of these causes operate to lessen the revenue of the Department, the expenses of transporting the mail are not affected or lessened by them; and I respectfully suggest whether the evils which I have referred to do not deserve the serious attention of Congress, so far as to call for some more specific legislation, whereby they may be removed or suppressed.

The total gross revenue of the Post Office for the fiscal year, commencing on the 1st of July, 1840, and terminating on the 30th June, 1841, was \$4,539,252 78; the total expenditure for the same time was \$4,759,110 29. In this year the expenditures exceeded the revenue by the sum of \$219,857 51. A statement of the expenditures more in detail, will in due time, as required by law, be reported to Congress.

The precise income and expenditure of the General Post Office cannot be known in any one year, until the close of the fiscal year, and the settlements of all accounts have been completed. Consequently, any statement of expenditure and income, for the present year, is liable to the fluctuations and changes incident to the peculiar character of the service.

The expenditures and income of the Department for the current year may, upon estimate, be stated in round numbers as follows:

Total amount of revenue derived from postages, fines, and all other sources -	\$4,539,252 78
Expense of mail transportation -	\$3,145,000
Commission to postmasters, if the rates of per centage mail unchanged -	1,015,000
Ship, steamboat, and way letters -	20,000
Incidental expenses, including banks, stationery, printing, &c. -	310,000
Total estimated expenditure -	\$4,490,000
Total estimated income -	\$4,500,000
	\$10,000

Thus it will be seen that the probable amount of expenditure will exceed the amount of revenue, as estimated, by \$10,000.

With this deficit presenting itself so palpably to my mind, I have essayed to infuse into the administration of the service a rigid economy, yet, with all the vigilance which it may be possible to exercise by the most rigid economy, I am satisfied the expenditure cannot be reduced within the income, without either reducing the transportation of the mail below the just wants of the community, or in some other mode increasing the revenue of the Department.

To continue the present amount of service, and extend it with the growth and spread of our population, particularly in the West, the present revenue, with its former charges, is evidently inadequate, and a reduction of that service, or a reduction of the present standard, would have to take place, unless Congress make an appropriation from the public Treasury, which I neither ask nor desire to see made.

Upon a view of all the circumstances, and with a perfect sense of the delicate responsibility assumed, I have felt myself imperiously called upon to exercise a power vested by the President in the Postmaster General, and have recommended the commissions heretofore allowed to deputy postmasters. By this regulation, a copy of which is annexed, there will be added to the net annual income of the Department about \$100,000. I thought it better to do this than to ask Congress for an appropriation, or to reduce the transportation of the mail below the just wants of the community.

When it is known that this reduction has been made to enable the Department to send intelligence among the people, by land and water, and to extend the service, and not in a spirit of parsimonious economy, the liberal and enlightened of all sections will, I am persuaded, approve what has been done; and I will not allow myself to believe that those whom it most immediately affects will view it in an illiberal spirit.

Should Congress, however, not approve of this measure, they will have it in their power, before the order takes effect, to arrest its force; and will no doubt adopt the necessary measures to require the reduction of mail service, or to provide the means of paying the balance which will be due to contractors at the end of the year.

The annexed report of the Auditor of the Post Office Department (marked B) will exhibit the progress which has been made in the adjustment and liquidation of the accounts of postmasters since the 4th of March last.

It is to be expected that among 14,000 deputy postmasters (appointed generally without personal knowledge of the individuals or their securities) there will be found some who will prove faithless to their trusts, and whose securities are not good for the amount due the Department. In view of this, I have instituted a rigid inquiry, not only into the fitness and business qualifications of the postmasters, but the solvency of their securities, from which the best results may be anticipated. This operation, performed in part by the special agents of the Department, under the letter of instructions annexed, (marked C), and its prompt settlement of the accounts of all postmasters, will more effectively guard the Department from losses by defaulting postmasters.

The reduction of the postage upon letters is a subject which has engaged the public attention for years, and is one of great interest to the whole community.

The Department, to recommend a reduction of the rates of postage, as now fixed by law, but invite a modification of them so far as to make them conform more generally to the smallest cost of the transmission, and solicit a revision of the laws regulating the postage on newspapers. I do not desire that the rates of postage on newspapers proper should be increased, though such might be saved to the Department if the principle of (protection) was applied to newspapers, through such regulation was deemed expedient to public opinion. I must, however, earnestly invite your attention, and hope you will call that to Congress to the necessity of the enactment of some law by which a just discrimination may be made in the imposition of postage proper and those newspapers which indicate which assume the shape and name of newspapers, but which are, in fact, the re-publication of books, reviews, and novels, sent through the post office, not always to subscribers, but in large masses to agents, to vend the market of that most distant cities, towns, and villages, which greatly increase the size and weight of the mails and the expense of transportation, without a corresponding remuneration to the Department. The great number of these large publications, which have been sent by the mail from Baltimore to Wheeling has only contributed to the frequent irregularities of the Western mails for the last twelve months. I respectfully inquire whether it is just that the United States mail should be compelled to transport one of these papers, weighing nearly a pound, for a cent and a half, from New York to New Orleans, Louisville, Kentucky, to a factor, to sell for the benefit of the publisher, while the letter of friendship or of business is taxed with twenty-five cents postage between the same points.

I have already alluded to the establishment of what are called private presses, for the carrying of letters, packages and newspapers, upon the post roads of the United States, for pay and compensation, as one cause tending greatly to the reduction of the revenue of the Department. I must beg leave again to bring the subject more particularly to your notice, under a hope that you will invite that of Congress to the necessity of some further legislation, more effectually to protect the interests and the rights of the General Government in its Post Office Department.

If there is any grant of exclusive power to Congress upon which all unite in opinion, it is the power to establish post offices and post roads; and it may fairly be assumed as an admitted principle, that when Congress, in the exercise of that power, has established a post road, the right of a State, or the individuals of a State to establish a post road, or to carry letters, packages and newspapers upon and over the same roads, for compensation, cannot be successfully maintained.

How far this usurped power has been exercised by individuals, and what the consequences have been, I am not fully informed; but the information communicated to the Department induced me to avail myself of the services of the First Assistant Postmaster General while on a temporary visit to Philadelphia, to collect and report to you such information upon this subject as his other engagements would permit, and I have the honor now to submit to you his report.

Another report from the First Assistant Postmaster General, herewith submitted, will present you with a detailed statement of the amount of mail service for the year ending the 30th June, 1841, and the rate of cost for the same in each State and Territory, distinguishing between each character of service. By this report it will appear that the United States mail was transported on railroads and steamboats 3,946,450 miles, at the rate of \$1.84 per mile, and by stage 12,088,862 miles, at the rate of \$1.87 per mile, and by coaches 18,961,213 miles, at the rate of \$1.91 per mile, making a total aggregate of annual transportation of 34,996,525 miles, at the rate of \$1.89 per mile. The act of 1838 declares that "each railroad within the limits of the United States which now or hereafter may be completed shall be a post road;" and in that law, and the act of 1839, provisions limiting the amount beyond which the Postmaster General is prohibited from paying for the transportation of the mail on railroads are found.

Great embarrassments to the Department have arisen in the making of contracts for the transportation of the mail with many of the railroad companies, under the law now in force. These embarrassments arise mainly from two causes: the one, that the price which the Department is enabled to pay, by reference to its means or the maximum fixed by the legislation of Congress, has been deemed inadequate by many of the principal companies. The other arises from an unwillingness on the part of some of the companies to run by a schedule prescribed by the Department—preferring to run at such times and places as the travel upon the road—regarding, as it is natural for them to do, the carrying of the mail as secondary to the transportation of passengers. The latter evil has been particularly felt in the great Southern mail, its transit from Washington to New York.

The mail going South from New York is necessarily thrown upon the Philadelphia and Baltimore route; and the Southern mail for New York is compelled to lie over twelve hours in Baltimore, unless the Philadelphia company can be induced to run that trip also in the night. This they have declined doing, unless the Department would pay them a compensation greater than is authorized by the laws of Congress. Under a hope that some arrangement could be made, leaving the decision of Congress, the President addressed to the presidents of the railroad companies concerned in the transportation of the mail between the city of Washington a letter, a copy of which, and the report of the First Assistant Postmaster General upon this subject, are herewith submitted to you. An anxious desire to effect some permanent arrangement with the railroad companies for the transportation of the mail, upon a basis which shall be both just and uniform, considering the nature of the service performed by each, induced me to invite a meeting of the presidents of the different companies, at the city of Washington, on the 1st of January next; and I am gratified at the prompt manner in which all who have been heard from have consented to attend, and a hope is cherished that some arrangement, satisfactory to all parties, and beneficial to the public, may yet be effected.

The improved mode of intercommunication by rail-road and steam, operating under chartered rights granted by the States, and over which it is not permitted to exercise the control of the General Government, has placed the Department in a position to exercise any control, in my opinion, can only be cancelled by the adoption of some measure whereby the Post Office Department may, upon adequate compensation, secure by contract the right to transport the mail in the railroad companies, and at the same time give to the Department the power to control the departure and arrival of the same.

There is now paid to the different railroad companies, annually, over \$400,000 for the service, without power in the Department to regulate the travel, arrival, and departure of the mail; and constant and frequent difficulties, both in entering into and the execution of contracts, are presented.

It has occurred to me that the present was a most favorable period for the adoption of some measure by Congress, whereby to secure to the United States the right to transport the mail upon these roads in all time to come, free of any annual charge upon the Post Office Department, by the advancement of a sum in gross, which may be agreed upon, to each of the companies, or to each of them as may be willing to contract. Many of the railroad companies, and some of them constituting most important links in the great chain of intercommunication between Boston and Charleston, owing to the great derangement of the national right to transport the mail in the railroad companies, and at the same time give to the Department the power to control the departure and arrival of the same.

The credit of the United States to an amount not greater than the sum necessary to produce, at five per cent. interest, the amount paid by the Post Office Department to the companies annually, would, I think, be sufficient to accomplish this desirable end. The prompt and favorable action of Congress upon this subject at the present time, would effectually secure the Government against the danger of being called upon for occasional and large appropriations to meet the demands of the Department.

Do I ask the United States to do more for the Post Office Department than justice would seem to demand, especially when it is remembered that the whole expense of the official correspondence of the Government and the public, and private correspondence of the country, is now paid by a tax upon the correspondence of the community? If by this arrangement the Department is relieved from the heavy annual charge as now rated, and it has neither the power to lessen it nor to prevent its increase, it may be hoped that the object of such demand by considerations of public justice, that of reducing the tax upon the friendly and business correspondence of individuals, will be attained, and, at the same time, the usefulness of the public mail greatly enlarged and extended to those portions of the Union hitherto negligently denied the necessary facilities.

If the Government was required to pay postage upon official correspondence, and if the franking privilege was abolished or reduced to proper limits, the revenue of the Department would be increased to an amount sufficient of itself to pay the interest upon the debt to be incurred by the proposed arrangement, and to liquidate the principal in less than thirty years.

I respectfully submit to the President the propriety of communicating to Congress the views which I entertain, and have here expressed upon this subject.

Some embarrassments to the free transit of the United States mail coaches over that part of the Cumberland road which lies within the limits of the State of Virginia have been experienced during the present year, incident to a right assumed by the authorities of that State to impose a tax upon the coach transporting the mail.

In the act of Congress proposing a creation of all right which the United States claimed over said road, upon certain conditions, to the States through which it passed, it was expressly provided that no toll upon the stage coaches, &c. conveying the United States mail should be levied. With this, among other reservations and exceptions, the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio accepted the creation; and assumed the control over so much of the road as lay within their respective territories. It appears that, by a subsequent act of the Virginia Legislature, so much of the act by which she accepted the road, exempting the stage coach, &c. conveying the United States mail from the payment of tolls, was repealed, and a tax was authorized to be levied upon the United States mail, without doing violence to the further narrative upon this subject, I submit the letters and correspondence of the Department in relation thereto; and the documents accompanying the same.

There is no doubt that the State of Virginia is entitled to a right assumed by the authorities of that State to impose a tax upon the coach transporting the mail.

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AN EXILE'S PROPHECY.

England! thy sun is setting!
Thy glory waxeth dim;
Thy Genius, her charge forgetting,
Chaunteth thy dying hymn!

England! thy heart is rotten!
Corruption rankleth there;
Soon wilt thou be forgotten,
But as a race that lieth!

Look at thy population—
Hear ye that throbbing sigh?
See ye not gaunt starvation,
And the death glances of her eye?

What though thy pampered minions,
Thy ministers and lords,
Deal forth their grave opinions
In fair and honeyed words?

What though they hang around thee
A drapery of steel?
What though thy fleets surround thee?
Yet thou hast nerves to feel!

And palying death is stalking
Along thy life-path now;
And, in its noon-tide walking,
Blancheth thy sadding brow!

Thy arrogance hath doomed thee
To sure and sudden death!
Thy pride emboldeneth thee
To check thy pride emboldeneth thee!

And think'st thou, haughty nation,
Thus verging on this end,
To meet thine doom salvation
By grasping at thine friend?

Mark thee! thy death-spasm, England,
Doth in that clutched life!
And nations round thee, England,
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Chaunteth thy dying hymn!

England! thy heart is rotten!
Corruption rankleth there;
Soon wilt thou be forgotten,
But as a race that lieth!

Look at thy population—
Hear ye that throbbing sigh?
See ye not gaunt starvation,
And the death glances of her eye?

What though thy pampered minions,
Thy ministers and lords,
Deal forth their grave opinions
In fair and honeyed words?

What though they hang around thee
A drapery of steel?
What though thy fleets surround thee?
Yet thou hast nerves to feel!

And palying death is stalking
Along thy life-path now;
And, in its noon-tide walking,
Blancheth thy sadding brow!

Thy arrogance hath doomed thee
To sure and sudden death!
Thy pride emboldeneth thee
To check thy pride emboldeneth thee!

And think'st thou, haughty nation,
Thus verging on this end,
To meet thine doom salvation
By grasping at thine friend?

Mark thee! thy death-spasm, England,
Doth in that clutched life!
And nations round thee, England,
Prepare to see thee die!

England! thy sun is setting!
Thy glory waxeth dim;
Thy Genius, her charge forgetting,
Chaunteth thy dying hymn!

England! thy heart is rotten!
Corruption rankleth there;
Soon wilt thou be forgotten,
But as a race that lieth!

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